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ABSTRACT

Four issues concerning human values in America will affect the formation of future educational goals. These issues have impact on the development of a values system and on the analytical thought process. First is the need to choose between an emphasis on liberty and an emphasis on equality. Present confusion in American society is illustrated by the point that those persons who are against allowing individuals to decide on abortions are the same ones who insist on individual rights in regard to housing and the hiring of personnel. Second, decision making needs to include those affected by the results of the decision. Presently, decision making at a national level involves local issues, such as the presence of nuclear energy plants in certain states. Third, we must be aware that some of the decisions we make will affect our children. For example, the highway system of the 1950s immediately alleviated unemployment, subsidized trucking, and increased mobility. However, it fostered the deterioration of the railroads and the building of a residential pattern that has made us car-dependent. Fourth, we need to recognize the limitations of our present legal system and to find other methods of resolving and defining conflicts. Therefore, schooling should be organized to give students those skills which would make them able to make consistent decisions. The teaching of analytical thought processes should begin by making the student aware of personal values that are compatible with societal living. We should give students many options for fulfillment by allowing for various bases of self-respect in more noncompetitive circumstances. (KC)

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# Human Values and Educational Goals.

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Human Values and Educational Goals

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To meet our needs as a surviving society, education will soon have to make a 180° turn. Instead of attempting to instill increasingly more facts, and possible facts, into the heads of our people young and old, the schooling process will have to focus on the development of coherent systems of value priorities, using "facts" perhaps as illustrations. Increasingly there will be more and more that none of us knows; ramifications of present actions (whenever that present is) cannot be predicted with any assurance, and we should therefore not expect assurance. The only process by which we will be able to be comfortable with our present actions is to take decisions on the basis of a consciously cultivated sense of societal values, coherent enough so that the individual systems will be compatible with the group needs, consistent enough so that the individual can participate actively in political-economic processes in a constructive way. Public choices will be formulated in terms of value criteria, and protagonists will discuss choices in terms of consistency with past decisions or of a conscious shift from the past.

There are four major issues concerning human values in America which have to be aritculated before it is worthwhile to ask how they affect our educational goals of the future. These four issues can be summarized as follows.

First, there is the need to choose between an emphasis on liberty or an emphasis on equality. These are basically mutually incompatible---with the focus on the individual or on the group. We no longer have the material resources nor the physical space to pursue both, as we have done in the past: equality in the political arena, liberty in the social. These will have to be reconciled or balanced rather than being the extremities of our socio-political action pendulum.

Another major issue concerns the range of decision-making. Our system needs participation to survive. Participation is more effective on a local, immediate base. Yet the political, economic and social issues which will be placed before the public for decision are increasingly of at least national importance, and

what are seemingly local issues, such as the siting of a nuclear energy plant in New Hampshire, become of national concern since, in this example, the businessman in Louisiana and the rancher in Montana are affected. Where, then, and how can decisions be made so that they can be influenced by all those involved in the results and ramifications of those decisions?

The third major value issue which has to be confronted before one can look to our educational goals is that of context. As a society we have been singularly prone to deal with symptoms of problems, with peripheral questions around the central issues. We have repeatedly taken decisions for the present. We are now becoming aware of the burden of some of those decisions taken within the context of a former 'present' and perhaps we are becoming aware of the possibility that some of the decisions we make today will affect the lives of our children. We have been for the last three hundred years an ahistorical people. We have in effect based our national ideology and mythology on the absence of historical forces and on the conviction that the present and particularly the future are in our hands, every time again virginally unaffected by the past.

A fourth issue is one which is also woven into the very fabric of our society: the necessity of the Anglo-Saxon legal system to have winners and losers, innocent and guilty ones, prosecutors and defendants. This kind of confrontational definition of inter-personal relationships has obvious limitations and there are certainly other models in surviving societies which indicate that there are other ways of resolving (and defining) conflicts.

If one looks at these four issues more closely, one sees that they can be redefined without too much convolution by a single statement: we lack that sense of proportion which would make it possible for us to evaluate the relative importance of alternatives. This lack of a sense of proportion is directly related to the lack of coherence in our educational system...and the absence of purpose in what we have called our educational goals.

The educational system in any society has as its first aim the socialization of the children to become good citizens. By casually denying our children the ability to think, we are defining citizenship in a very specific way. We should become aware of this. As with most of our endeavors, we have never

really established "goals", except perhaps back in 1630 when some of us wanted to establish a Citty on the Hill. When that somehow or other did not materialize, I guess we just gave up on goals and decided that the past was past, that tomorrow would bring what it would and that we would live in and for the present. Partly this was the result of our immigrant peoples, who came to this country very deliberately to escape the past; partly it reflects the arrogance in our thinking that we, as a chosen people, could deny the past and be our own creators; partly, though, it also reflects our lack of understanding of that history and its usefulness to us.

At present, our system (I guess it could be called an "educational system") tries to teach stuff. More and more stuff. Of course, a certain amount of organized data is important, but the "knowlegge explosion" makes it an impossible task to assume that we can impart enough stuff...not only impossible but not effective in the development of individuals capable of actively guiding their own lives.

Regardless of the validity of some of the McLuhanistic remarks about the electronic age, it is and will remain necessary to be able to read. This will have to be taught from the very beginning of the child's exposure to the schooling system. A certain capacity to use the language actively as well...to be able to communicate with the written word...is also essential. Part of our present inability to figure out what the problems are (which really has to precede any attempt to solve them...we have tended to solve the symptoms since we didn't really know what the problems were) is the fact that we have been listening, with perhaps too much attention, to the group which denies the importance of verbal oommuniwations. That very structure which McLuhan rightly indicates as inherent in the written word, and which is absent in the electronic media, is what we now lack as a generally available tool for analysis. We have tried, valiantly, during the past fifteen years or so to demonstrate that it is not necessary to read and write to function in our present school systems and unfortunately have been quite successful. The results, though, hardly bring joy to the hearts of the people when we have school graduates who cannot read well enough to fill out job applications.

With electronic calculators, a good argument can be made for relying on them for computational activities; one has, though, to understand the process going on in that little black box to be able to know what kind of questions to ask and therefore what kind of answers to seek. That should, perhaps, be the other way around: we usually want the answers before we know the questions needed to evoke them.

After the first years, though, schooling would become a study of evaluation and thinking. The study of thinking has two major components: the process by which an embryonic idea is developed into a coherent thought-pattern which can be made understandable to others, and the process by which the various areas of human thinking(disciplines as they used to be called) formulate their subject-specific patterns of organization. Particularly as we grow older, we have a wealth of experiential data which can only be useful to us as we learn the process of organization.

The teaching of evaluation is another way of saying the imparting of a capacity to analyze. We have, one hopes, by this time accepted the 'fact' that no one is free of personal values nor that these personal values shape the way in which we define and discuss issues. The teaching of analysis, thus, will have to start with the process by which the student, as we all are, becomes aware of personal values and by this awareness can more effectively work towards a personal system which could be made compatible with societal living. Such value patterns which would evolve from a process-oriented education would not necessarily be consensual but the process for reconciliation would be acquired. Our individual value systems would be developed within an educational atmosphere in which consistency and coherence had replaced the multiplication tables and the cherry tree. I agree with Wilde that consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative and with Emerson that a foolish consistency is the hobgobblin of little minds. Yet we have neglected a sense of consistency in our decision-making for too long. We can no longer afford to do this.

If we can foster the ability to think----this keeps sounding silly, yet there are not many people around who can comfortably follow a thought-path. One of the results of television is a generation with many new and interesting insights into many

areas which are totally unrelated to each other or to anything else, which McLuhan suggests is the logical outcome of the post-Guttenburg age----by learning the processes of the several disciplines, we can perhaps instill a self-discipline into the thinking of all of us continuing students so that we will be able to reach decisions for which our grandchildren will not have to suffer.

What are some of the decisions which are impending and for which we are at present inadequately prepared? If we refer back to the original four major issues in value judgments, we can find illustrations of contemporary pertinence.

The issue of liberty and equality is nne with which our society has been confronted since the Founding Fathers,but until now we have had abundance enough to avoid a direct confrontation. Ours is a society in which the individual has unique importance; we have in the past been able to accept the idea that hard work will result in 'getting ahead', without being really conscious of the implication that getting ahead means that someone else is getting behind. Our expanding economy, and ~~contiaaant~~ continent, have been able, in the past, to give the impression that the bottom twenty per cent can always rise...and the influx of new inhabitants made that to a certain extent true. Therefore, to be simplistic, historical circumstances have given the almost justified impression that economic expansion has enabled equal access to individual liberty. Reliance on economic expansion, though, will not provide the illusion of sucuess in the future. This will lead to many painful decisions revolving around the basic question of whether we have a societal responsibility to a group(which involves a political process) or to the individual(which involves more of a social process), if we decide we have any such a sesponsibility at all.

The Bakke case is just one indication of the confusion we suffer in regard to the incompatibility of equality and liberty. Abortion, affirmative action, admission quotas, bilingual education, non-discriminatory housing ordinances: how can we decide these questions in a consensual manner unless we are capable of being consistent in our personal values? At present, the people against allowing persons individually to decide in the case of abortion are the same ones who insist on individual decisions in regard

to housing and the hiring of personnel. If there are over-riding social values/goals in this area, what are they and how can we individually reconcile them with our personal values? Even in the formulation of our personal value structures, we must resolve the group-or-individual emphasis criterion. We are woefully lacking in the training for this kind of activity. Here, too, the question of whether we ~~behave~~ behave according to one set of values politically and another socially arises. Generally, we seem, the majority of us, to accept equality as a legitimate political goal(even though we have no real idea of what we mean when we accept it thus) and yet a majority, one doesn't know how large, would be reluctant to accept equality as a social goal. Whether these can be separated is a genuine question which we cannot begin to answer without better evaluation processes.

The second ~~area~~ area, that of the range of decision making, can be illustrated by the example of our attitude towards local zoning ordinances. It is only on the basis of clear, coherent societal value structures that we will be able to decide either to over-ride local ordinances---and all the aspirations and dreams and efforts these reflect---to enable the dead-enders of the central cities to move to where the jobs are or to be willing to pay more taxes to create jobs and/or other support systems for those who remain behind in the cities. Such a decision is obviously easier if it is not your community which is involved. We have to find room for the generation which will be wanting its own housing within the next twenty-five years as well. Even with the best of family planning, our population will continue to grow for a while. Where are people to live...even middle-class people may not have the physical space to build their $75,000 homes. We are continually encroaching on our farm land, on our recreational land, on our space. Can the older generation continue to make it difficult for the ones coming along to have the same kind of life the parents have had? ~~It is~~ Is it realistic to expect that this kind of life can be perpetuated or will we all have to change? These are questions of range in decision-making.

When we look at context, the most striking example is perhaps the Federal Highway Program of the 1950s, executed with very good intentions to alleviate unemployment, to subsidize the trucking industry and to increase the mobility of our people. If we had

been able to foresee the possibility of the energy situation (which should not have been the surprise it continues to be for most of us), would we have so readily agreed to a program which has fostered the dilapidation of the railroad system, fostered a residential building pattern which has made us totally dependent on the family car, has made public transportation for the majority of the people an impossibility and has been partially responsible for the disappearance of the neighborhood community? And if we were consistent in our thinking, would we now be so hesitant to provide genuine assistance to the reconstruction of the railroads when we have been so generous towards the truckers in the past? We cannot afford, in many senses of that word, to be so unthinking in our less overt financial assistance programs which we, indeed consistently, call by other names.

The fourth major issue which I mentioned was the Anglo-Saxon process of confrontation and adversary proceedings. We have a pattern of deciding "maybe" in practice in many of our political decisions...covertly, usually, by underfunding a project which we really did not want to foster yet one which did did not want to deny because of pressures from various political/social groups or by continuing funds for a project which we had officially decided to stop but which we were under pressure to keep going (think of the many defense projects which continue to receive public funds even though it has become evident that they are going nowhere.) Yet even with this pattern of political expediency of waffling in the middle, officially we cannot allow decisions that do not have a majority/minority opposition. We are really terrible confused in this area. Now, when we are entering a period during which, because of resource scarcity and other constraints, we are going to have to decide questions with a "yes" or "no" rather than waffling, we remarkably lack the processes by which to arrive at a consensus on this because of our tradition of confrontation rather than accomodation. Slowly we are becoming aware that if a marriage fails it might be the "fault" of both parties rather than one, that if a politician has been lining his pockets, this might be the "fault" of the taker as welll as the giver. The whole concept of "fault" has been examined recently (no-fault automobile insurance) but is still the basis of our dealings with one another. This attitude bears directly on our approach to "crime" and "justice" which are both badly in need of revision. It should be apparent by now that oo

one cannot fight crime by only spending more money nor that with our increasingly technological society crime will be confined to the traditional criminals. If for no other reason, we should learn from the Watergate experience of educated lawyers defying the law and still not yet regarded as criminals.

Another fundamental issue is taking shape as a result of the persistent strike activities on the part of "public servants". To what extent can we allow a small group of people in effect to blackmail everyone else. Toynbee somewhere wrote that we are rapidly approaching the situation in which small groups of people who provide essential services will be vying with one another for political/economic power on the backs of us all. How can we resolve the problem of striking garbage collectors(sanitary engineers), or police, or coal miners? In such an area, the need for consistency is particularly important, since we must be able to decide in regard to groups of whcih we are not a part so that the decision will be comfortable to us in our group under comparable circumstances. This is somewhat similar to Rawls' idea of making a set of societal rules as if you did not know in advance what your position in that society would be. We cannot, I hope, live in a society where people are forced to do particular tasks. We teach our television viewers that middle-class values are the name-of-the-game, yet which middle-class white collar worker would willing become the local trash collector? The trend is already towards paying those doing unattractive jobs more than would be compatible with a system of paying according to training. Can we live with that kind of pattern: the less demanding a jon intellectually the more it should be paid? That would be an educational challengge indeed! Even the most optimistic futurist finds it difficult to foresee a time when all work would be fun and enjoyable. How will we recognize the person in the coal mine, in the uranium mine, on the back of the garbage truck? And if we do succeed in automating the undesirable jobs, what do we then do with the people who will have nothing to do. Player Piano suggests a value system which might be appropriate but it is not an attractive one. How can we define the individual person(ality) in such a way that it need not be economically productive in the present sense of the word yet still retains its claim to dignity and respect?

This is perhaps an additional educational goal, to give our continuing student many options for fulfillment. This, though, can only be implemented if we change our human values to allow for various bases of self-respect in more non-competitive circumstances. Perhaps we could teach getting together instead of getting ahead.....